

**Testimony for the Joint Legislative Public Hearing  
New York State Senate Committees on Finance and Higher Education  
New York State Assembly Committees on Ways & Means and Higher Education**

*Submitted by Clara Haskell Botstein, Associate Vice President for Early Colleges, Bard College*

*January 31, 2017*

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Clara Haskell Botstein, and I am the Associate Vice President of the Bard Early Colleges. As you may know, Bard College, a nonprofit, independent college of the liberal arts and sciences based in Annandale, NY, runs a network of degree-granting, public early college high schools that offer students the opportunity to earn 60 transferable college credits and a Bard College Associate in Arts degree, *at no cost to students*, alongside a state high school diploma. This network includes Bard's flagship early college campuses in New York: Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) Manhattan (established in 2001) and Bard High School Early College Queens (established in 2008). Based on the success of the BHSEC model, Bard has opened BHSEC campuses in Newark, NJ (2011), Cleveland, OH (2014), and Baltimore, MD (2015). The Bard High School Early College network currently serves over 2,100 students, with approximately 1,150 in New York City.

At the Bard High School Early College campuses, college preparatory and college courses take place within the same public school building and are taught by faculty who hold terminal degrees in their fields and have college teaching experience, as well as a commitment to teaching younger scholars. The BHSECs offer robust student support services, including tutoring, guidance, and college transfer advising, to promote student success at BHSEC and beyond.

The Bard Early College model has proven extraordinarily effective in positioning young people from a wide range of backgrounds to succeed in higher education. In the BHSEC NYC Class of 2016, 93% of students earned an Associate's degree alongside a high school diploma, and 100% of students earned a high school diploma and some college credit. Approximately 95% of graduates continue their education at a four-year college or university, including CUNY and SUNY campuses and selective independent colleges. To date, well over 90% of BHSEC graduates (97% in the Class of 2005-09) have completed their baccalaureate degrees, a significantly higher percentage than the national average of 60%. The significant, positive impact of BHSEC on college enrollment and completion has been validated by independent, quasi-experimental research conducted by Metis Associates.

The Bard High School Early College are part of a statewide network of over 30 early college high schools serving over 12,000 students, 21 of which receive state support through the New York State Smart Scholars grant program. To qualify for state funding, early college high schools must have a formal partnership between at least one local education agency (LEA) and at least one institution of higher education (IHE) and must allow participating students the opportunity to simultaneously complete requirements toward a high school diploma and earn a minimum of 24 and up to 60 transferable college credits as part of an

organized course of study toward a postsecondary degree or credential at no cost to the participant or the participant's family. Early college high schools typically serve students who are low-income, first generation college-goers and/or underrepresented in higher education.

As New York explores ways to make college affordable for students, we urge policymakers to look at strategies that are working, not just to reduce the cost of college, but also to ensure that students complete degrees, and on time. Early college high schools, which have existed in New York for over 15 years, do just that. Rigorous research studies, such as those conducted by American Institutes for Research (AIR), Metis Associates, Columbia University, CUNY, and a half dozen states show that early college students, including low-income and first-generation college students, are *significantly more likely to enroll in college and complete college degrees* than comparison students who do not attend early colleges. The AIR study, which used a randomized control trial design, found that early college students' college completion rates were 20 percent higher than those of comparison students. Furthermore, and significantly, early college models include all sectors of New York's robust non-profit higher education sector, and allow students to have access to a free college education at two- and four-year public and independent institutions.

As the New York State legislature looks at its priorities for FY 2018, we urge members of the Assembly and Senate to support and sustain New York's successful network of early colleges, including the Bard High School Early Colleges in Manhattan and Queens. These schools have costs above traditional high schools, by virtue of providing a college education at no cost to students and their families. As part of its support, we urge the legislature to support the Governor's proposed investment of approximately \$11 million for early college high schools, including the state's current investment of approximately \$3 million for the 21 "Smart Scholars" early college high schools and new investments of \$3 million for "Smart Transfer" early college models that offer students a degree or equivalent and a clear pathway to a four-year IHE and \$5.3 million for new early college high schools, with a priority for programs that prepare students for careers in computer science and other technology fields.

While Bard College applauds Governor Cuomo's increased investment in early college high schools and hopes the legislature maintains the proposed funding level, we urge the Assembly and Senate to go further and identify a consistent, recurring funding formula for these effective models and codify early college high schools in statute, recognizing and securing their place in the fabric of education in New York State. This can be accomplished by the passage of early college legislation, on the model of S7496/A10024 from the 2016 session. The passage of early college legislation in New York State would align well with national education policy trends in this field, as early college appears for the first time in the country's recently reauthorized K-12 education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Through a sustained investment in early college high schools, building on the great progress already made, New York State can help thousands of students get a free college education *and* increase their likelihood of completing degrees, ready to enter the workforce. By changing the timeline of the traditional grade 9-16 education system and allowing students to start postsecondary education earlier, this investment also yields cost savings for the overall education system, not least because of the reduction in remedial education needs. For all these reasons, we urge you to make the long-term investment in early colleges that recognizes this growing movement's important position in New York as an effective

alternative to both traditional high school and traditional college for students from all backgrounds, and an approach that achieves the dual aims of college affordability and college success.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony, and do not hesitate to reach out to me (at [cbotstein@bard.edu](mailto:cbotstein@bard.edu) or 914-388-0699) if you have any questions or if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

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Bard College

